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Committee on the Rights of the Child
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Summary record of the 2077th (Chamber B) meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 19 January 2016, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Mezmur

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives (CRC/C/MDV/4-5, CRC/C/MDV/Q/4-5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Maldives took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives), introducing the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Maldives, said that significant progress had been made since the Committee had considered the country's last report. Maldives had achieved five of the eight Millennium Development Goals several years ahead of the deadline; infant and maternal mortality rates had dropped significantly; vaccine-preventable diseases including polio and diphtheria were non-existent; HIV/AIDS infection rates were low; and malaria was under control. Moreover, the literacy rate had increased from 70 per cent in 1977 to 98 per cent in 2015.

3. Nonetheless, his Government was not complacent. Real challenges persisted and the country maintained an unwavering commitment to the rights of children. The legal framework for its actions in that regard was the 2008 Constitution, which promoted the welfare of children and provided guarantees of non-discrimination, equality and protection against abuse. The Government was also working on an ambitious legislative programme to strengthen legal safeguards for children, including the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill, which would replace the existing Act on the Protection of the Rights of Children and make the Convention an integral part of national law. Other proposed new legislation included the Juvenile Justice Bill, which would make national policy consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. Recent laws such as the Domestic Violence Act, the Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Act and the Sexual Offences Act also helped protect children and other vulnerable groups, and Maldives had acceded to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. A nationwide toll-free children's helpline existed to report cases of abuse, and a register of child sex offenders had been published. The Act on the Protection of the Rights of Children had already been amended to guarantee universal access to free primary and secondary education, an entitlement actively promoted by President Abdul Gayoom as part of his "No Child Left Behind" policy. Thanks to those measures, the country had achieved near universal school enrolment, including gender parity, at both primary and secondary level.

5. The inclusive education policy had greatly enhanced access to education for children with disabilities. Fifty-four special-needs units had been set up in mainstream schools across the country and it was envisaged that at least one teacher trained to attend to children with special needs would be available in every school by the end of 2016. Early intervention centres had been established in Male and three more atolls to provide diagnosis, education and care for children with disabilities. Maldives had established universal health insurance and continued to invest in improving health services. Immunization coverage was around 99 per cent and the available evidence suggested that child nutrition had improved.

6. Maldives maintained a policy of moderation and openness but it was not immune to the global threat of terrorism and had recently passed the Anti-Terrorism Act. The country's society, history and tradition were intimately linked to Islam, which formed the basis of the Constitution and laws. Calls to introduce values and practices contrary to the tenets of Islam would not be accepted by the people of Maldives.

7. A safe home for children who needed to be separated from their families to prevent further abuse had been set up in Male in 2005, and a further four such homes had been established on different atolls in 2014. A new children's home in Hulhumale was due to open in February 2016. The State sought to find foster families for children in its care. Fostering was currently approved by a foster care panel and monitored by the Ministry of Law and Gender, but the regulations in that regard would be amended by the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill.

8. For the forthcoming 15 years, child protection policies would be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, which the Government intended to pursue relentlessly. However, daunting challenges remained, such as the immense economic cost of implementing the systemic changes envisioned in the 2008 Constitution, and the time and effort required to transform those changes into societal norms as the young democratic system replaced traditional power structures.

9. **The Chair**, speaking as Country Rapporteur, said that Maldives was to be commended for passing new legislation and allocating increased resources to child protection, as well as for signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. He asked if there were any plans to proceed with the ratification of the Protocol and requested information on the outcome of the feasibility studies on the withdrawal of reservations to articles 14 and 21 of the Convention. He was pleased to see that certain critical pieces of legislation were before parliament but drew attention to concerns regarding the first draft of the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill in such areas as shared parenting, premature removal of children from birth families and inter-agency coordination. He asked how the Juvenile Justice Bill would be synchronized with the Criminal Code.

10. He wished to know how Maldives intended to establish a stable, legislatively mandated and properly resourced body to coordinate the efforts of government departments with those of other stakeholders in implementing and promoting the Convention. He asked the delegation to provide further information on the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan and on any mechanisms in place to track and assess child-specific expenditure. According to information available to the Committee, the allocation of resources to government departments with responsibility for children's issues had diminished until 2010 and then increased after 2012.

11. In light of the fact that Maldives admitted certain exceptions to its definition of a child, he wondered what measures were taken to ensure that all persons under the age of 18 were adequately protected in accordance with the ideals enshrined in the Convention.

12. **Mr. Nelson** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee was well aware that collecting accurate data was a costly process, but it was of paramount importance for conducting studies into children's rights issues. He commended Maldives on its Child Protection Database, established in 2010 with the assistance of UNICEF, and asked whether it was also accessible to agencies working with children. Were there any plans or budget allocations to improve the database or to set up other databases to support it, including a national children's database?

13. Since most of the complaints handled by the Human Rights Commission of Maldives appeared to relate to violations against children, he wondered whether the Government had given any consideration to appointing a children's ombudsman to sit on the Commission, as was done in other countries. The Committee was aware that the Supreme Court of Maldives had issued a ruling against the Commission after the latter had submitted a critical report to the Human Rights Council as part of the second universal periodic review of Maldives. He wished to know if that ruling had been revised or if it still had the force of law. Noting that the Commission's budget had

reportedly been reduced, he asked what impact that would have on its ability to monitor juvenile detention centres. The establishment of Family and Child Service Centres and Child Protection Groups in the atolls was an admirable initiative but steps had to be taken to support them and address the problems they faced.

14. The Committee would like to know whether the Convention had been officially translated into Dhivehi and whether it was taught as part of the school curriculum. He asked the delegation to explain what was being done to combat the widespread misconception that the Convention was in conflict with the teachings of Islam.

15. He was concerned that the periodic report made no mention of teenage prostitution. His own Internet research had confirmed that the phenomenon did exist, as was inevitable in a country so heavily involved in international tourism, and he wished to know what measures were being taken to combat it. Did the law hold hotels and resorts accountable and were individuals who used or promoted such services prosecuted?

16. **Ms. Khazova** said that Maldives had made significant progress in abolishing discrimination, especially for children born outside wedlock, but problems persisted. According to her information, non-Muslims could not be granted Maldivian citizenship, and yet the country was home to many foreigners; although she was aware that it might be impossible for a Maldivian Muslim woman to marry a foreign non-Muslim man, she wished to know whether a child born of such a union would have the right to Maldivian nationality. She asked the delegation to provide further information on the rules whereby a biological father could legally acknowledge paternity of a child born outside wedlock.

17. Although much had been done to create awareness among the population of the equality of girls and boys, she wished to know what steps were being taken to tackle gender stereotyping within the family and the subordinate position of girls, especially with regard to inheritance rights. She was concerned about discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children, who suffered discrimination in many respects despite the fact that, according to the Constitution, all individuals were equal before the law. She wished to know whether the State party would reconsider its attitude towards such children. Although birth registration rates had improved, a small minority still thought that such a practice was contrary to their beliefs. She asked for details about any progress made in countering that misconception and ensuring that all children were duly registered.

18. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether there were any measures in place to protect children from child pornography and other dangers on the Internet, and whether there were any programmes in schools to prevent harassment and bullying online. Given that children were prohibited from joining associations, she would like to know more about the mechanisms that allowed them to express themselves.

19. According to information before the Committee, censorship of the media was rife in the State party. She therefore asked how the Government was giving effect to children's right to access information appropriate to their stage of development.

20. Given the rise in divorce rates in the State party, she asked how the Government ensured that the best interests of the child were given priority in custody and child support proceedings, and whether divorcing couples were required to participate in reconciliation procedures. She asked whether divorce by repudiation was recognized in the State party. Lastly, she asked whether the Government planned to conduct a study to determine the root causes of the high divorce rate.

21. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked whether the State party had made any efforts to create a legislative framework that would encourage children's participation in

administrative decisions affecting them and in other areas of life. She asked what steps were being taken to raise awareness among judicial officials about the need to take children's views into account in custody proceedings. She requested further information on the handling of complaints received through the children's helpline.

22. She asked whether the Government was raising awareness among parents and teachers about the risks to children posed by social networks. She wished to know more about the codes of conduct established in some schools, including who drafted them and how they were implemented. Further details would be welcome regarding the circumstances under which children had been injured in political demonstrations. She wished to know the extent to which gangs were active in the State party.

23. Given the significant effects of climate change in the country, she asked what the Government was doing to raise children's awareness of the issue and to encourage their participation in efforts to combat climate change. Lastly, she requested clarification as to whether children who had no birth certificate were offered some alternative form of registration that allowed them to enrol in school.

24. **Mr. Nelson** requested statistical data, disaggregated by sex and type of offence, on the number of cases in which flogging had been handed down as a criminal punishment. He also requested further information on cases in which minors had been sentenced to life imprisonment. Referring to the case of a 17-year-old girl sentenced to flogging for the offence of fornication, he asked whether the other party involved in the offence had also been prosecuted.

25. Noting the low number of convictions for child sexual abuse, he asked whether judges and lawyers received training on the relevant legislative measures. He wished to know whether the shelters provided for in the Domestic Violence Act had been established, and he asked what measures were in place to protect child victims during the pretrial process, particularly when the alleged abuser was a family member. He wished to know whether the Evidence Bill had been drafted and, if so, when it would be adopted.

26. According to information before the Committee, the practice of female genital mutilation was on the rise in the State party. Was there any specific legislation prohibiting the practice and was anyone who promoted it prosecuted?

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

27. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure was currently being discussed within the Government but that no final decision had been taken thus far. His Government did not have any plans to withdraw its reservations to the Convention. The Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill, if enacted, would incorporate the Convention into national law and would address many of the issues raised by Committee members. With regard to inter-agency coordination, for example, the bill called for the establishment of a national coordination council to regulate the implementation of child protection laws in the country. The Social Work Bill would contain more specific regulations on issues such as joint custody.

28. Following a lengthy consultation period, both the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill and the Juvenile Justice Bill had been submitted to parliament. Once the latter had been adopted, the Criminal Code would be amended to bring it into line with the new legislation.

29. Several ministries had significantly increased their budget allocations for various child protection efforts. Both the existing laws and the Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill defined a child as a person under 18 years of age. All child protection measures applied to anyone under the age of 18, although it was

permissible for children from 16 to 18 years of age to marry. The Child Rights, Child Care and Child Protection Bill also called for the appointment of a children's ombudsman.

30. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court had instructed the Human Rights Commission of Maldives to omit from its reports any information that was not backed up by evidence. The Commission was a State constitutional body, not a civil society organization, and as such it operated in accordance with the procedures set out in the Constitution and other relevant legislation. The Government was committed to ensuring the Commission's full operational independence. There had not been any strategic decision taken to decrease the Commission's budget. While an overall decrease in the State budget was reflected in the budget allocations for the Commission, its allocation had not decreased any more than those of other State agencies.

31. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that data on children were collected with the help of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and made available to all institutions working in the field of child protection. Efforts were under way to establish a new database on social protection for a number of vulnerable groups, including children.

32. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that Family and Child Service Centres had been established in each of the atolls and that the budget allocated to them had doubled from 2015 to 2016. The number of administrative and technical staff assigned to the centres had increased, and social workers employed by the centres received continuous training in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners. A pilot project would be carried out in 2016 with the aim of strengthening child protection mechanisms, and it was hoped that the project would lead to improved services throughout the country.

33. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that claims that female genital mutilation was on the rise in the country were baseless. In fact, female genital mutilation had never been part of Maldivian culture in recent memory, and the State authorities had not received any reports of it being introduced. The practice was banned by the Constitution and was classified as a criminal offence.

34. Any reports received of child sex tourism would be investigated. Tourist resorts were located on their own separate islands, away from the areas inhabited by Maldivians. Movements in and out of those resorts were carefully monitored, making it difficult to bring Maldivian children to the resorts for purposes of sex tourism.

35. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that the State party had been very active in disseminating information on the Convention. A new curriculum focusing on civic and human rights had been rolled out in schools nationwide in 2015. Human rights clubs had been set up in all schools and the Ahan — Listen to Us campaign had been launched in 2015, with the support of UNICEF, to raise awareness of children's rights among parents and children.

36. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that, under article 9 of the Constitution, any child born to a Maldivian man or woman was also a citizen of Maldives. A child born to a Maldivian woman and a non-Muslim foreign man would therefore have Maldivian citizenship. In the case of children born out of wedlock, parental rights were granted to the mother. Inheritance rights were governed by the principles of sharia law. With regard to LGBT persons, he recalled that Islam formed the basis of the Maldivian Constitution and all laws. There were very few reported cases of births not being registered, but the Ministry of Law and Gender took direct action if any were brought to its attention by the Family and Child Service Centres in the atolls. A special procedure had been agreed with the Ministry of Education to ensure that children could be enrolled in school pending formalization of their birth registration; work was

under way on a national registration bill. Parents or guardians could be prosecuted if they failed to comply with reminders to register or vaccinate their child.

37. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether it was possible for a biological father to acknowledge paternity of a child born out of wedlock.

38. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether any cases of female genital mutilation had ever been brought before the courts. Were efforts being made to promote the universality of human rights? And how was the promotion of gender equality in accordance with sharia law understood?

39. **Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives) said that there had been no reported cases of female genital mutilation and thus no prosecutions. He would like to know what evidence had been provided that the practice was prevalent in Maldives.

40. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the biological fathers of children born out of wedlock were not entitled to claim paternity rights.

41. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that child protection was a priority for every school and preschool in the country. The Government's core policy for education was the "No Child Left Behind" policy. To ensure child protection in school settings, good partnerships had been developed with the police, the Ministry of Law and Gender and the Juvenile Justice Unit. With regard to cyberbullying, crime and prostitution, the Ministry of Education had recently launched a joint programme with the police and had a verbal agreement with the NGO Advocating the Rights of Children (ARC), which had developed a comprehensive programme to promote smart and safe Internet use. Risk assessments would begin in schools in 2016, so that action could be planned if necessary.

42. **Ms. Shafeea Riza** (Maldives) said that, under the Constitution, everyone had the right to freedom of association, including children. Under the 2003 Associations Act, children could not be founding members of an association, but there was nothing to prevent them from becoming regular members, and many did so. The Act was currently being reviewed to bring it into line with the 2008 Constitution.

43. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the right of both children and adults to access information was recognized under the Constitution, and expanded upon in the recent Access to Information Act. Censorship of information was constitutionally prohibited, even in a state of emergency. The high divorce rate was one of the most pressing social issues in Maldives. The best interests of the child were taken into account in custody decisions, and the relevant officials received regular training on that issue. The Family Act provided for a lengthy reconciliation process for divorcing couples; exceptions were made only in the case of domestic violence. If a divorce was concluded outside the court system, the husband was fined and the divorce had to be registered judicially. There were plans to carry out a study into the root causes of the high divorce rate.

44. **Mr. Ashraf** (Maldives) said that the children's helpline set up in 2009, which allowed children to report cases of child abuse and request assistance, had registered more than 2,000 calls in 2015. Cases were referred to the Ministry of Law and Gender and dealt with in the same way as all other reports of abuse.

45. **Mr. Nelson** said that one of the Committee's sources on female genital mutilation was a former Maldivian Attorney General, Mr. Husnu Al Suood, who in 2009 had stated that the people responsible for reviving the practice in Addu were religious followers who preached that it was compulsory.

46. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that codes of conduct in schools set out the ethical standards to which teachers were expected to adhere and covered issues such as interacting with students and parents and managing student behaviour.

47. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the new bill on children's rights included provisions to promote the participation of children in a range of areas. Climate change was being addressed as a key issue in schools, and environment clubs had been set up in all schools. The Ministry of Environment and Energy had conducted a nationwide awareness-raising programme for children on the impact of climate change.

48. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that there was no gender discrimination in access to education or health services. Gender parity had been achieved in primary education. The Ministry of Law and Gender had launched a programme to raise awareness of prenuptial agreements in order to minimize the impact of divorce on women.

49. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said it was true that a 15-year-old girl convicted of fornication had been sentenced to flogging in 2013. However, the State had brought an appeal on her behalf and the High Court had overturned the ruling. There had been no other cases of flogging of children.

50. **The Chair** said that while the Committee welcomed the fact that that ruling had been overturned, it remained concerned that the possibility of imposing such a sentence existed.

51. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said it was not true that the death penalty could be ordered for children as young as 7 years of age. By law, the age of criminal responsibility was 10. Children aged between the ages of 10 and 15 had the benefit of an excuse defence, except for *hadd* offences.

52. **Ms. Winter** asked if that meant that the death penalty could be ordered for children aged between 10 and 15 who had committed a *hadd* offence.

53. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said it was theoretically possible that a child aged between 10 and 15 could be sentenced to death for the crime of wilful murder. The death penalty had been ordered for minors in five cases but none of the penalties had been enforced. Four of the minors had committed the offences at the age of 17 and one at the age of 15 but all had been over the age of 18 when sentenced. A de facto moratorium had been in place for many years but there had recently been a policy shift on the death penalty. There were ideological differences of opinion with regard to the death penalty globally, but as Maldivian laws provided for it, it could be carried out in accordance with the 2014 regulations, which included a range of safeguards. The victim's family received counselling, with an emphasis on forgiving the accused, in accordance with sharia law. To date the death penalty had not been enforced.

54. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** asked whether the State party planned to establish a juvenile justice system in line with the Convention and to prohibit the death penalty and life sentences for minors.

55. **The Chair** said that while there were ideological differences of opinion concerning the death penalty generally, there was no ambiguity in the Convention when it came to the death penalty for minors. Even if sentences were never enforced, the very act of pronouncing the death penalty for offences committed by persons under the age of 18 was of serious concern to the Committee and should be prohibited. He requested an update on the bill on the enforcement of the death penalty and asked how the fact that death penalty and flogging sentences were automatically appealed tallied with the implementation of, in particular, articles 37 and 6 of the Convention.

56. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) said that the Juvenile Justice Bill included provisions on the age of criminal responsibility; it would be for parliament to decide on the matter.

taking into consideration the provisions of the Convention. The bill on the enforcement of the death penalty had been drafted but not yet finalized. Since the enactment of the Special Measures Act in 2009, there had been 74 convictions for child sexual abuse. Lawyers, judges, prosecutors and police investigators were systematically trained to ensure that children were not doubly victimized and that their best interests were taken into account. There was currently one shelter in Male and four in different atolls, but the aim was to have one on all atolls within the next three years. The first draft of the Evidence Bill had been circulated to all stakeholders and comments were being awaited.

57. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that she would appreciate information on the situation of the children without birth certificates who were given a provisional certificate allowing them only to enrol in school. She asked whether amendments to the Associations Act would provide for the participation of children in political activities. She would welcome information on any efforts made by the authorities to help teachers and parents give children guidance on how to use the Internet and social media safely.

58. **Mr. Anil** (Maldives) stressed that all children born in the country were issued with birth certificates. In some cases, the process could take time, but children awaiting a birth certificate still enrolled in school.

59. **Ms. Hameed** (Maldives) said that the Ministry of Law and Gender had published booklets for parents about the safe use of the Internet by their children and distributed them over a large number of atolls. The Ministry had also organized events, for both parents and children, on Internet safety.

60. **Mr. Nelson** asked whether the authorities had any information on the teen suicide rate in the State party. He wondered what specific issues the National Mental Health Policy addressed and what resources had been set aside to implement it. He also wondered whether mental health treatment was widely available.

61. Statistics showed that a large percentage of persons in the 15 to 19 age range used drugs in the Maldives. He therefore asked whether the State party ran any programmes specifically for children who used drugs, whether it had any inpatient drug treatment and rehabilitation centres, and, if so, whether they were all located in Male, the capital, or whether they could be found elsewhere in the country. Were anti-drug messages delivered in schools?

62. More information on what the Juvenile Justice Bill was designed to accomplish would be welcome. He took it that it would not abolish corporal punishment or life imprisonment, but it would nonetheless be interesting to know whether it introduced any diversionary penalties and when it was expected to enter into force. Had any measures been taken to facilitate its implementation?

63. He would appreciate clarification on the information shown in the tables found in the replies to the list of issues. For example, was the number of minors arrested for various offences in 2012 to 2014 roughly equal to the number of prosecutions? In the same connection, he wondered whether children accused of offences were entitled to the assistance of counsel and, if so, whether the State party funded a legal aid scheme for minors who could not afford counsel. He also wondered whether detained minors and adults were held in separate facilities and whether there were juvenile courts in such locations as Addu and Fuvahmulah.

64. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the Committee was concerned by the State party's apparent lack of statistical information on the number of children with disabilities in its territory. The authorities did not seem to know, for example, how many such children did not attend school or how many were institutionalized. He

asked what statistics the authorities drew on to develop policies on children with disabilities and what they intended to do to begin collecting relevant statistics. He wondered whether the 39 units for children with special educational needs were open to children with physical or sensory disabilities and whether the establishment of such units could really be described as a measure taken to develop an inclusive education policy and address the discrimination faced by children with disabilities in the school setting. He also wished to know whether the Government had conducted outreach campaigns to combat the stigmatization of children with disabilities and whether it had made any efforts to encourage parents of children with disabilities to ensure that their children were included in the State party's disability registry.

65. **Ms. Winter** said that she would appreciate a response from the delegation to reports that girls were still being withdrawn from school at a very young age and that children in conflict with the law were denied their right to an education. The Committee had also received reports that instructional resources, including school textbooks, contained xenophobic material. One grade 11 textbook evidently even called on its readers to take part in jihad against those who obstructed Islam. She wondered whether the authorities had seen those books and whether they had taken any action to warn children against leaving the country to fight for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

66. She wished to know whether children working for their families' businesses were legally protected from exploitation, as the provision of the Employment Act prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 16 made an exception for children working for such businesses. In addition, she asked whether the State party had any plans to define more clearly the provision of the Act under which persons under the age of 18 were prohibited from being employed in any way that could have a detrimental effect on their health, education, safety or conduct, and whether labour inspectors had received training on the special protections required by children. Lastly, she asked whether children addicted to drugs could choose between treatment and punishment and, if not, whether there were any plans to provide for such a possibility.

67. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether the placement of children through *kafalah* was recognized by the State party and, if so, whether there were mechanisms to ensure that children so placed were not exploited. She also asked whether the children of incarcerated parents could maintain contact with their parents and whether children newly born to women in prison were able to stay with their mothers.

68. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** said that she would appreciate information on any efforts the State party had made to promote breastfeeding. She also wondered what educational services were provided for children up to 3 years of age.

69. **The Chair** asked what efforts the authorities had made to engage with religious leaders in an attempt to win support for such initiatives as age-appropriate sex education. He wondered what consequences parents faced when they refused to allow their children to be vaccinated. What happened, for example, when a parent attempting to enrol a child in school was unable to produce the required vaccination card?

70. **Ms. Azza** (Maldives) said that preventing drug abuse was a major concern. By law, the State was required to establish drug rehabilitation centres for children. One such centre, for which a budget had already been allocated, was currently being set up. For the moment, there were no legal provisions allowing drug addicts to choose between treatment and punishment. The State was also required to have a comprehensive drug prevention strategy. As part of that strategy, the Ministry of Education organized drug prevention programmes in the schools.

71. **Ms. Rishmee** (Maldives) said that plans had been made to designate mental health focal points in all health facilities. They would be responsible for maintaining patient lists and placing orders for medication.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.